Hearts and Minds

You are a member of a committee advising the heart specialists at St. James’s Hospital on whom to accept as recipients of hearts for transplants. St James is an under-resourced hospital that lacks sufficient funding to run many of the operations it needs for its patients. A heart has just become available and there are several candidates to receive it. Below is a list, in order from the first to request a heart to last, of the candidates. You must decide by the end of this class, otherwise the chances for the operation’s success will not be great. All candidates are terminally ill and may not survive if they do not receive a new heart soon.

1. Maeve, an attorney, 28, recently graduated from law school, and is a leading human rights attorney. She currently works for non-profit organizations that represent indigent (needy) refugee clients. Maeve is the head attorney in a case before the EU that could lead to the development of the first policy requiring all countries to rescue refugees at sea. She has heart disease and diabetes and has been told that she needs to eat better and start exercising.
2. William is a 17-year-old honors student who is the captain of his school’s debate team and one of the best players on his school rugby team. He used to live in a homeless shelter until he earned a full academic scholarship to university for his ground breaking work around a cure for Alzheimers disease. He has one arrest for being drunk in public after the Dubs won the All-Ireland.
3. John is a 47-year-old single man. He is one of the best heart surgeons in Europe and has operated on dozens of people, including several operations where he donated his time and was the only reason the patient survived. In his spare time he enjoys attending football matches, operas, and “United Europe” rallies.
4. Orlagh, a cancer researcher, 78, who other researchers believe may be close to finding a cure for cancer. While Orlagh works with the research team primarily, her company employs 40 people in offices in Dublin and Derry. Without her leadership, the research company would fail and all employees would lose their jobs.
5. Frances is a 10-year-old girl. She is a former victim of domestic violence and is currently living with her adopted parents. Her violin instructor states that she is among the top 1% of students he has ever heard. A prominent supporter of the arts and member of the Dail agreed to donate 2 million pounds to the hospital if she receives the heart.

Additional Scenarios

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* Orlagh was your best friend growing up. No one on the committee knows that you know Orlagh. You know that Orlagh is absolutely driven to find a cure for cancer because she is a cancer survivor, a fact she does not share with many people in order to maintain her credibility as a researcher on the topic. You also know her parents (still alive at 104!).

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* Your lifelong aspiration is to rise to the top of the hospital leadership team and change how the hospital treats homeless people in Dublin. You learned that William is the god-son of the CEO for the hospital when you were invited to a fancy family event last weekend. The CEO drew you aside and explicitly asked you to help ensure that William gets the heart as he wants to “promote and work with people I know have my interests at heart, just like I have their interests at heart.” You know that you would be able to help thousands of homeless people if you are able to lead the hospital’s future efforts.

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* You are Frances’s doctor. You know that she was recently diagnosed with a rare, untreatable, degenerative blood and bone marrow disease that means she will be lucky to survive more than 18 months, and almost certainly will not make it two years.

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* John is your brother. **Right now, no one on the committee knows that you are related.** You are very close to him and cannot image your life with him. Similarly, your kids—ages 2 and 5—love Uncle John because he takes care of them on the weekend when you’re at work. You are aware that John is deeply troubled by the extremist views of many of the United Europe members.
* Congratulations! You are the committee chair for the group. No else knows this yet so you have to let them know. As the committee chair you are responsible for managing the committee and delivering a final decision for the committee. You are free to run the decision-making process however you feel fit. However, you—not your colleagues—will be submitting the name of the candidate.